

AFRICAN ARCHIVISTS AND CANADIAN SCHOLARS MEET IN MONTREAL

On the afternoon of October 11th, archivists from four African countries met informally with 26 Canadian faculty members and students at the Sir George Williams campus of Concordia University to learn more about each others work and to explore the possibilities of cooperation in scholarly research and training. Plans for the meeting originated in Nairobi last summer when Robert J. Kukubo of the Kenya National Archives mentioned to Frank Chalk of Sir George Williams that he and several other African archivists hoped to be in Ottawa from October 7th to 10th to attend the XVth International Conference of the Round Table on Archives. Early in the fall, the Canadian Association of African Studies and the Sir George Williams Faculty of Arts agreed to co-sponsor the Montreal meeting and, with the assistance of Dr. W. I. Smith, the Dominion Archivist, arrangements were made to hold the mini-conference.

Publicity for the meeting was a serious problem since there was uncertainty until the last minute about which archivists would actually attend the conference. When a minimum number of confirmations were received, the meeting was announced through the regional representatives of the Association. The meeting attracted a large number of Montreal-area faculty members and students from a broad array of disciplines, including history, political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, art, and library science.

The archivists who came to Montreal were M. S. Batheas Mollomb, Directeur Générale du Service de Bibliothèques d'Archives et de

Documentation du Congo (Brazzaville); Mr. R. J. Kukubo, Acting Chief Archivist, Kenya National Archives; Mr. J. C. Enwere, National Archives of Nigeria, University of Ibadan; and Prof. Amadou Alassane Bousso, Ecole de Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentatlistes, Université de Dakar. Each member of this panel presented some preliminary considerations for potential users of the archives in his country and answered questions addressed to him from the floor. Frank Chalk (History, Sir George Williams) and Myron Echenberg (History, McGill) coordinated the discussion.

Kenya's Robert J. Kukubo fully outlined the ground rules for archival research in his country. Since they closely resembled the requirements in many African countries, the other speakers shortened their presentations to avoid repetition. Kenya assigns a high priority to studies with an African perspective, Mr. Kukubo reported. The Archives operate under a liberally interpreted 30-year access rule that allows scholars to examine colonial documents of more recent origin if they were used to prepare published government reports. All applicants should notify the Archivist of their field of study, the chronological boundaries of their subject, who is funding their project, and their university affiliation at home. Kenya also requires each researcher to obtain the support of a local academic, to secure approval of the project by the President's office, and to submit a short resumé of the work to be done. Graduate students must submit letters of support from their dissertation directors with their applications. Duplication of work done by other scholars is discouraged unless the applicant has developed a new approach to the research subject. The Kenya Archives require

researchers to deposit copies of their published research reports and to give the Archives copies of interview tapes if oral traditions are being collected.

Scholars interested in Kenya can expect publication of a new guide to the Archives in about two years, according to Mr. Kukubo. In the meantime, they may wish to consult the lists of research findings deposited in the Kenya National Archives and the inventory of pre-Uhuru doctoral and master degree theses deposited in overseas institutions which Mr. Kukubo has published in the journal he edits, Ecarbica, the official journal of the East and Central Africa regional branch of the International Council on Archives, Volume I, No. 1, April 1973 (to obtain copies, write to: The Editor, Ecarbica Journal, c/o Kenya National Archives, Jogoo House "A", P.O. Box 30520, Nairobi, Kenya. Ecarbica is published in April and September each year and costs the equivalent of K. Shs. 2/-). A list of microfilmed newspapers and archival records which can be purchased from the Archives appears in the same issue of the journal.

J. C. Enwere followed Mr. Kukubo's presentation with a discussion of the Nigerian National Archives at the University of Ibadan. The collection is divided into three parts: public documents; missionary records; and private family papers. Government records and most of the missionary materials are under the standard 30-year access rule, but some missionary societies have insisted that 50-years must elapse before their records are opened. Access to family papers is also a problem. The Archive has little leverage since it is only a custodian of family records. The Nigerian Archives regularly

dispatch special inventories and hand-lists to the U.S. Library of Congress and will also send them to interested scholars and librarians in Canada. Requests for microfilm copies of specific documents will be honoured whenever possible.

M. Mollomb and Prof. Bousso noted in their presentations that there is much room for cooperative research with overseas scholars in Congo(Brazzaville) and Senegal. Opportunities exist in both countries for the microfilming of archival materials requested by Canadian scholars. As in the case of other African nations, it is essential that Canadian researchers deposit reports of their findings with the archives to make them available to local scholars and administrators. M. Mollomb and Prof. Bousso would be pleased to assist Canadian scholars to contact the appropriate faculty members, archivists, and government officials in their countries.

After an intensive question and answer period, the discussion continued over wine and cheese. In the judgment of most participants, the meeting registered several pluses. Researchers just about to enter the field were strongly reminded of the need for adequate prior consultation with African scholars and archivists. The meeting impressed on everyone who participated the importance of allowing sufficient time for research proposals to be scrutinized and the need to thoroughly investigate procedural requirements in advance. If these guidelines are followed, Canadian scholars should be able to examine the records they need for their research with a minimum of difficulty.

The meeting also brought out the fact that African archivists are generally unfamiliar with the rapid growth of African studies in Canada. Most of the archivists had never heard of the Canadian Association of African Studies before the meeting and none had seen a copy of the Canadian Journal of African Studies. This seemed to be the result of the fact that the Journal is distributed primarily to academic staff and university libraries in Africa. There is clearly a need to intensify distribution of the Journal to African archivists and to insure that research findings by Canadian scholars, past and present, are speedily made available to them. Hopefully, the Montreal meeting was just the first step in this direction.

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